

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

★ news release

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

Most - 343-5634

For Release to PM's, FEBRUARY 12, 1964

WHOOPING CRANE FLOCK SHOWS GAIN OF ONE

Thirty-three whooping cranes, believed to be the entire wild population of North America's largest wading bird, are wintering at Aransas National Wildlife Refuge on the Texas Gulf Coast, the Department of the Interior reported today.

Although this total includes seven young of the year, the apparent loss of six adult birds from the 32 that reached Aransas in the fall of 1962 indicates a net gain of only one bird for the year.

Of the 32 whoopers counted on the refuge in 1962, only 28 could be located in the spring of 1963, just prior to the northward migration. Two of last spring's 28 migrants failed to return to the Texas wintering grounds.

The whooping crane nesting grounds are in Canada's Wood Buffalo National Park. The 2,000-mile migration route holds many dangers for the birds, especially during the fall hunting season. The northward migration usually starts in late March or early April and the trip south to Aransas is normally well under way by the end of October.

Whooping cranes are large white birds about five feet tall, with red-crowned heads and black-tipped wings. The young birds are a rusty color, which gradually changes to white during their first year.

There are seven whooping cranes in captivity. Six of these are at the New Orleans Audubon Park Zoo and one is in a zoo at San Antonio, Texas.

x x x